

10 February 2009

Respected Members of the Human Services Committee,

I am unable to attend the Public Hearing today in which you are hearing numerous bills regarding the Department of Children & Families. I would however like to share my support and opposition to several of these bills, I will keep my comments as brief as possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank The Human Services Committee and other concerned legislators for taking up this issue so fervently this year. I am the Director of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a private, non-profit psychiatric watchdog organization, and as such have met countless parents who have been adversely affected by the DCF and the heavy reliance DCF has on psychiatric/psychological services.

Proposed S.B. No. 636 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE AND PRESERVATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS IN PROCEEDINGS ALLEGING CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN. I support this bill and urge you to pass it.

Proposed H.B. No. 5232 AN ACT CONCERNING A CHILD'S AUTHORIZATION OF A CLINICAL TREATMENT PLAN FOR PSYCHIATRIC AND COUNSELING SERVICES. I am opposed to this bill in that it is vague regarding age and treatment. Certainly if you have a 3 year old, that child cannot make sound judgments regarding his treatment, however someone older - 11, 12, 13 etc. that minor should have a say in what is done to his body. Does that minor not also have constitutional rights? I believe it would be a violation of those rights to force treatment on that minor that he/she does not want.

H.B. No. 5421 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING PROCEEDINGS AND OPERATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. I support this bill and urge you to pass it.

Proposed H.B. No. 5425 AN ACT PROHIBITING RELIANCE ON A THEORY OF PREDICTIVE NEGLECT OR PREDICTIVE ABUSE IN THE ADJUDICATION OF CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE CASES. I support this bill and urge you to pass it.

Proposed H.B. No. 5980 AN ACT CONCERNING VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES. I support this bill and urge you to pass it. I would suggest that the language in (4) be changed to say "a refusal to participate in voluntary services shall not be used as the basis"

Proposed H.B. No. 5981 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND PARENTS OR GUARDIANS IN JUVENILE MATTERS. I support this bill and urge you to pass it.

Proposed H.B. No. 5982 AN ACT CONCERNING DISCLOSURE OF DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RECORDS. I support this bill and urge you to pass it. I do however think it is too vague. What records? Who makes the determination as to what can and cannot be released?

Proposed H.B. No. 6145 AN ACT CONCERNING EVIDENCE IN DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PROCEEDINGS. I support this bill and urge you to pass it.

Proposed H.B. No. 6148 AN ACT CONCERNING RIGHTS OF JUVENILES UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. In general I support this bill, however I am opposed to mental health screen as it is subjective, and unlike medical screenings has no objective scientific testing to back it up. Section 8 of the bill needs to include 'free from chemical restraints'. Section 11 needs to include something regarding how are the follow up evaluations going to be done, who is going to determine if the treatments are working or not, and in what time frame? Section 12 what is the time limit? Is there already an applicable statute regarding cases being handled in a timely manner?

Proposed H.B. No. 6150 AN ACT REQUIRING INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO PARENTS CONTACTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. I support this bill and urge you to pass it. I think that Section (1) should include "in their language" and "in terms that can be easily understood" as well as after 'relevant documents' it should be added "including but not limited to any police reports, court orders" etc.

Thank you very much for taking my views into consideration regarding the above legislation.

Sincerely,
Noelle Talevi
Exec. Dir. CCHR-CT
256 Brainard Hill Rd.
Higganum, CT 06441
860-345-3900